United Nations S/2015/820

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 October 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 26 October 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the twenty-fifth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 23 September to 21 October 2015.

With respect to the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities, I am pleased to note that the sixth of the seven hangars was destroyed with the additional required explosives that were recently procured for that purpose. The destruction of this sixth hangar has been verified by OPCW. The verified destruction of six hangars and five underground structures leaves one remaining hangar to be destroyed. I have been informed that, unfortunately, the final hangar continues to be inaccessible, owing to the prevailing security situation.

I also note the significant progress made in destroying all chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, with the resumption of the remaining destruction activities, which are expected to be completed before the end of 2015.

Last month, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team submitted a note to the OPCW Executive Council regarding the work, outcomes and status of outstanding issues related to the Syrian initial declaration. In taking note of this report, the Executive Council requested the OPCW Director-General to report to it, before its eighty-first session in March 2016, on the details of all unresolved issues, in particular those for which no further progress has been made. Accordingly, the work of the Assessment Team will continue.

As I stated in my previous letter (S/2015/737), the activities of the OPCW fact-finding mission that is investigating allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic are continuing. Following the completion of this work, the findings are expected to be submitted to the Director-General before the end of October. I take note of the Director-General's intention to attach these findings to his next monthly report.

Preparations are ongoing for the OPCW-United Nations joint investigative mechanism, established under Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), to become operational as soon as all core staff have been recruited and enough funds raised through voluntary contributions to support the material and technical needs of the mechanism. The leadership panel of the mechanism, which is composed of the head of the mechanism and her two deputies, began its work on 24 September 2015.

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The identification of those responsible for the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is of the utmost importance. Those responsible for their use must be held accountable. Those who would consider making use of such weapons in the future must be deterred by the certain knowledge that such acts will not be overlooked and that such actors will be held accountable by the international community.

I would be grateful if you could urgently bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 September 2015 to 21 October 2015 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

Note by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2 (f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed requirements for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and Syrian chemical weapons production facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).

4. This, the twenty-fifth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 23 September to 21 October 2015.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress within the reporting period by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) Regarding the 12 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) in the Syrian Arab Republic, the sixth of the seven aircraft hangars was destroyed with the recently procured explosives, while the seventh hangar remained inaccessible during the reporting period due to the security situation. The Secretariat has verified all five underground structures and six hangars as destroyed.

(b) On 13 October 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-third monthly report (EC-81/P/NAT.1, dated 13 October 2015) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

(c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1 (e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. Significant progress has been made in destroying all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, which were removed from its territory in 2014. A combined total of 98.9 per cent of all declared chemical weapons has been verified as destroyed, which includes the isopropanol previously destroyed in the Syrian Arab Republic, 100 per cent of the Category 1 chemicals, and 94.5 per cent of the Category 2 chemicals. Also, facilities in Finland and Germany have destroyed all effluents produced by the neutralization process of sulphur mustard and DF that took place on board the United States vessel MV Cape Ray. As at the cut-off date of the report, a total of 55 per cent of the remaining Category 2 chemical, hydrogen fluoride (HF), has now been destroyed. Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC in the United States of America resumed its destruction activities during the reporting period after having completed the implementation of its technical solution to ensure the safe processing of the badly corroded HF cylinders. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties in The Hague on this activity, which is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. The Secretariat continued its cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services in the context of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, and is in the process of finalizing arrangements to continue such cooperation to support that mission. Three OPCW staff members were deployed as part of that mission as at the cut-off date of this report.

8. The Director-General has continued to communicate with senior representatives of the States Parties hosting a destruction facility or providing assistance with the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, and with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

9. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained their ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) completed its eleventh visit to the Syrian Arab Republic as previously reported, and the Secretariat issued a Note entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team Covering the Period April 2014 to September 2015" (EC-80/P/S/1, dated 25 September 2015), covering the DAT's tenth and eleventh visits, the notable outcomes to date, and the current status of outstanding issues. The Council, at its Eightieth Session, took note of the report and the Secretariat's presentation in that regard, and requested that the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic expedite their efforts to resolve the issues. The Council further requested that the Director-General report to it before its Eighty-First Session on the details of all unresolved issues, in particular those for which no further progress has been possible.

10. The DAT will continue its technical consultations and interviews with key principals from the Syrian chemical weapons programme on its next visit, which is scheduled for 2 to 12 November 2015.

Supplementary resources

11. The total contributions of EUR 50.3 million in the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons and the contributors thereto remain unchanged from the previous report.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

12. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues to analyse information collected in the course of its most recent deployments. This includes information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and from other sources alleging the use of toxic chemicals as weapons. The findings of the FFM are expected to be submitted to the Director-General before the end of October 2015, and will be shared with States Parties and also attached to his next monthly report to the United Nations Secretary-General in accordance with Council decision EC-M-48/DEC.1.

13. The OPCW is actively supporting the commencement of the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism established under United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015). The Organization is providing specific technical and analytical expertise to the Mechanism, which is expected to become operational in early November 2015.

Conclusion

14. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the DAT and FFM activities, as well as the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar.